

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2787
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AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION NATO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 0220

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UR, YU, AL
SUBJECT: BOVIN ON YUGOSLAVIA AND ALBANIA

REF: 76 BELGRADE 6832

1. SUMMARY. IN JAN 5 CONVERSATION, SENIOR IZVESTIYA
COMMENTATOR BOVIN, WHO COVERED BREZHNEV VISIT TO BELGRADE,
SAID EXCHANGES HAD BEEN FRANK BUT NOT SHARP, WITH TWO
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SIDES MAINTAINING POSITIONS, AND RESULT WAS IMPROVED
RELATIONS. DIFFERENCES PERSISTED ON NON-ALIGNMENT,
WORKERS' SELF-MANAGEMENT, AND INTERNATIONALISM, WHERE
SOVIET PROPAGANDA IS BEHIND SOVIET POLICY: REAL SOVIET
POSITION ON INTERNATIONALISM IS DEFINED IN BERLIN ECPC
DOCUMENT TO WHICH YUGOSLAVA ALSO SIBSCRIBE. ON POST-
TITO PROSPECTS, BOVIN SAID NERVOUSNESS HE HAD FOUND

THREE YEARS AGO HAS DISAPPEARED, AND HE IS CONFIDENT YUGOSLAVIA WILL REMAIN STRONG AND STABLE AS USSR WISHES. CAPABLE COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP IS IN WINGS, SYSTEM WORKS, ESPECIALLY ON NATIONALITIES, AND PEOPLE LIKE IT. THERE IS NO REASON FOR U.S. AND USSR TO FIGHT OVER YUGOSLAVIA AFTER TITO. ON ALBANIA, BOVIN SAW INSTABILITY AS GAP WITH CHINA OPENS OUT, WITH HOXHA PETRIFIED AT FOREIGN INFLUENCE WHICH CAN ONLY BE YUGOSLAV, BUT FOUND YUGOSLAVS THEMSELVES RELAXED AND FOREBEARING. BOVIN WAS OBVIOUSLY PUTTING BEST GLOSS ON SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING JAN 5 CALL BY ACTING POL COUNSELOR AND EMBOFF ON IZVESTIYA SENIOR POLITICAL COMMENTATOR ALEKSANDR BOVIN, HE WAS ASKED TO COMMENT ON COURSE AND RESULTS OF BREZHNEV VISIT AND PERSPECTIVES FOR YUGOSLAVIA AND SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS. BOVIN REPORTED FOR IZVESTIYA FROM YUGOSLAVIA DURING VISIT, IN SUNNY TONES STRESSING STABILITY, AND REFERRED IN HIS ARTICLES TO 1955 AND 1956 BELGRADE AND MOSCOW DECLARATION WELL BEFORE REFERENCE APPEARED IN COMMUNIQUE. WHILE HE INSISTED HE WAS TRAVELING ON PREVIOUS INVITATION FROM YUGOSLAV JOURNALISTS, SO THAT HIS AND BREZHNEV'S VISITS MERELY COINCIDED -- HE HATES VISIT REPORTING, HE SAID -- HIS EX POST FACTO COMMENTS MAY BE OF INTEREST.

3. SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS SHOULD BE IMPROVED BY VISIT, BOVIN SAID. HE HAD NOT BEEN WITH DELEGATION IN NEGOTIATIONS, BUT HE UNDERSTOOD EXCHANGES HAD TOUCHED CONFIDENTIAL

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ON ALL IMPORTANT TOPICS, AND HAD BEEN VERY FRANK, BUT NOT SHARP. SIDES HAD STATED AND EXPLAINED THEIR POSITIONS, WHICH WERE NATURALLY OFTEN DIFFERENT, AND LEFT IT AT THAT.

4. BOVIN NAMED THREE AREAS WHERE POSITIONS DIFFERED AND CONTINUE TO DIFFER: YUGOSLAVS ATTACH A GOOD DEAL MORE IMPORTANCE THAT SOVIETS TO NON-ALIGNMENT; TWO SIDES HAVE DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF INTERNATIONALISM; AND, NATURALLY, THERE IS NO AGREEMENT ON VALUE OF WORKERS' SELF-MANAGEMENT. ON LATTER POINT, HE HAD SPENT "HOURS" DURING VISIT ARGUING WITH KARDELJ, A "TRULY CREATIVE MARXIST," WITHOUT ARRIVING AT MEETING OF MINDS.

5. ON INTERNATIONALISM, YUGOSLAVS WERE NATURALLY WARY, GIVEN EXPERIENCE OF 1948 AND AFTER, ABOUT SOVIET INTERPRETATIONS. ONE TROUBLE WAS THAT PROPAGANDA REACTS MORE SLOWLY THAN POLICY, HERE AS ELSEWHERE, AND IS RUNNING BEHIND: IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE FOR YUGOSLAVS TO LATCH ONTO SOME LOWER-LEVEL IDIOT (DURAK) WRITING IN PRESS,

AND TO BECOME UPSET. THEY ALSO TAKE OFFENSE AT SUCH THINGS AS THE TREATMENT OF YUGOSLAVIA -- AND "REVIONIST" -- AT THE 25TH CPSU CONGRESS, FORGETTING THAT IT WOULD PROBABLY CHANGE BY THE NEXT CONGRESS. UNFORTUNATELY, WORDS PLAY AN EXAGGERATED ROLE IN SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS, GIVING THEM A SOMEWHAT "RELIGIOUS" CAST. ASKED WHAT SOVIET INTERPRETATION OF INTERNATIONALISM ACTUALLY IS, BOVIN REPLIED THAT IT IS THE BERLIN ECPC DOCUMENT DEFINITION, WITH WHICH YUGOSLAVS ALSO AGREE.

6. ON SOVIET INTENTIONS, BOVIN SAID HE HAD FOUND NO CONCERN AMONG "SERIOUS-MINDED POLITICAL FIGURES," ALTHOUGH CONCERN INDEED EXISTED AMONG LOWER-LEVEL POLITICAL TYPES AND SOME JOURNALISTS. THIS WAS NATURAL, GIVEN HISTORY OF RELATIONS SINCE 1948, FACT THAT USSR IS CLOSE TO YUGOSLAVIA, AND ALSO FACT THAT MOST YUGOSLAVS IN MIDDLE GROUP HAD COME OF AGE DURING THIS TIME OF EXTREME TENSIONS IN RELATIONSHIP. CONFIDENTIAL

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BUT HE HAD NOT FOUND THIS CONCERN AT HIGHER, "SERIOUS" LEVELS. ASKED WHETHER "FRANKNESS" OF DISCUSSIONS DURING VISIT MIGHT NOT HAVE MADE YUGOSLAVS MORE WORRIED AFTER VISIT THAT BEFORE, BOVIN SAID HE HAD SEEN NO EVIDENCE FOR THIS, RATHER THE CONTRARY.

7. ASKED ABOUT POST-TITO PERSPECTIVES IN YUGOSLAVIA ITSELF, BOVIN SAID HE WAS UTTERLY CONFIDENT. THE SOVIET UNION WANTS A STRONG, STABLE YUGOSLAVIA, AND THIS IS NOW THE LIKELY PROSPECT. ON HIS ONLY PREVIOUS VISIT, THREE YEARS AGO, HE HAD FOUND REAL NERVOUSNESS ABOUT PROSPECTS, BUT IT HAD DISAPPEARED IN THE INTERIM.

8. ASKED ABOUT LEADERSHIP, BOVIN SAID SMILINGLY "THERE WILL BE NO VACUUM"; THERE ARE A NUMBER OF CAPABLE LEADERS READY FOR COLLECTIVE SUCCESSION. HE MENTIONED KARDELJ, BAKARIC, DOLANC, BILIC, MILATOVIC AND GLIGOROV. DESPITE HIS OPERATION, KARDELJ HAD LOOKED HEALTHY AND IN FULL, GOOD FORM WHEN BOVIN HAD MET WITH HIM. BOVIN VOLUNTEERED THAT ONE OF HIS YUGOSLAV FRIENDS HAD NOTED THE POSSIBILITY OF A KARDELJ PRESIDENCY WITH DOLANC AS LCY "GENERAL SECRETARY."

9. FURTHERMORE, HE WENT ON, THE YUGOSLAVS HAVE A SYSTEM THAT WORKS AND THAT MOST YUGOSLAVS LIKE. IN PARTICULAR, THEY HAVE AN EXTREMELY WISE NATIONALITY POLICY: THEY INSIST THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN ATTEMPT TO CREATE A "YUGOSLAV" NATIONALITY, AND ARE SUCCESSFUL IN ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO DEVELOP WITHIN THEIR NATIONS. NATURALLY THERE ARE LARGE DISPARITIES. HE HAD BEEN IN BOTH SLOVENIA AND KOSVOE, IN SLOVENIA HE REMEMBERED THE ROWS OF BANKS, IN

KOSOVO THE ROWS OF SHOESHINE STANDS. BUT THE YUGOSLAVS
HAD A GOOD APPROACH TO THEIR PROBLEMS. ASKED IF HE THOUGHT
THE ROOTS OF "SOCIALISM" ARE FIRM AND DEEP, BOVIN
REPLIED SLYLY THAT HE CONSIDERED THEM AS FIRM AND DEEP
IN YUGOSLAVIA AS IN POLAND.
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10. THERE IS CERTAINLY NO REASON, BOVIN CONCLUDED
WITH EMPHASIS, FOR THE U.S. AND THE USSR TO "FIGHT"
(VOYEVAT'SYA) OVER YUGOSLAVIA AFTER TITO GOES.

11. ASKED HOW HE HAD FOUND YUGOSLAV ATTITUDES TOWARD ALBAINA, BOVIN SAID THEY WERE RELAXED. HE HAD BEEN THERE DURING THE 7TH ALBANIAN PARTY CONGRESS, AND HIS YUGOSLAV FRIENDS HAD BEEN LAUGHING AT HOXHA'S SPEECH. A GAP HAD OBVIOUSLY OPENED OUT IN SINO-ALBAINIAN
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RELATIONS AFTER MAO'S DEATH -- BOTH HE AND THE YUGOSLAVS HAD NOTED THAT HOXHA HAD NOT MENTIONED HUA KUO-FENG-- AND HOXHA WAS OBVIOUSLY PETRIFIED AT THE PROSPECT OF INCREASING FOREIGN INFLUENCE IN ALBANIA, WHICH COULD ONLY BE YUGOSLAV. THE PURGE WHICH CULMINATED AT THE CONGRESS BOVIN ADMITTED, WAS A SEVERE IN ITS EFFECTS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AS THE CPSU PRUGR AFTER THE 17TH CONGRESS HERE (IN 1934), AND DEMONSTRATED HOW SERIOUS THE TENSIONS AND INSTABILITIES IN THE COUNTRY WERE. THE YUGOSLAVS WERE ALSO MILDLY WORRIED ABOUT POSSIBLE ALBANIAN AGITATION IN KOSOVO, WHERE NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS IS INCREASING AS IT IS EVERYWHERE IN THE COUNTRY. BUT THEY HAD A GOOD POSTURE -- LET THINGS WORK THEMSELVES OUT, AND TAKE ALBANIAN POLEMICS LYING DOWN IN THE MEANTIME -- AND SAW NO REASON TO DEPART FROM IT.

12. COMMENT. BOVIN IS THE NEAREST THING TO AN IN-HOUSE LIBERAL THAT THE SOVIET PRESS ESTABLISHMENT CARRIES AT PRESENT, AND HE SOMETIMES GOES A SHADE BEYOND THE ORDINARY WHEN HE TALKS AND WRITES. IN THIS CASE, HOWEVER, HE WAS OBVIOUSLY DELIVERING THE HIGH-GLOSS MESSAGE ABOUT THE BGRNTM EV SITIT AND SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS THE SOVIET WANT HEARD.

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